

GEOFFREY NORMAN FERNIE

1934-2020

- 1934 (September) born in Perth, Western Australia
- 1955 appointment of G Maunsell & Partners to design the Narrows Bridge.
- 1956 graduated from University of WA
- 1957 joined GM&P as junior site engineer, Narrows Bridge
- 1959 after opening of the Narrows Bridge moved to GM&P's Perth office
- 1960 sent to London to learn bridge design where he met John Downer
- 1963 Manager Canberra where Commonwealth Avenue Bridge was under construction
- 1967 M&P was created as an Australian partnership
- 1968 became a partner in M&P
- 1970 M&P incorporated and Geoff was a director
The West Gate Bridge collapsed in October.
- 1972 Manager WA
- 2020 (18 June) died at age 85

This document was assembled by Tony Herbert on behalf of Geoff's many colleagues at Maunsell, a firm to which he devoted all of his working life. The document is intended for private distribution to those that remember Geoff and enjoyed his friendship and generosity. Tony can be contacted at ajherbert@bigpond.com. Version date 27 June 2020

JOHN DOWNER¹

I first met Geoff in London in 1960. We played for an Australian cricket team in the London home county region. Geoff was an outstanding cricketer, having represented the University of WA in three first grade premierships. At that stage Geoff was working for an "up and coming consultant, Maunsell" and I was working with WS Atkins. It was through his friendship that I joined Maunsell on my return to Australia in 1963. At that time Geoff was running our Canberra office, where exciting projects - the Lake and the two bridges were taking place. As Maunsell expanded rapidly, Geoff moved to the head office in Melbourne and I replaced him in Canberra.

In 1966 we came together on the design of the concrete spans of the West Gate Bridge for which I was sent to London, but kept closely in contact with Geoff. At this stage, 9 years into my professional life, I had decided that Geoff was the most outstanding design engineer with whom I had ever been associated, and I was never to change that view. He would walk through a drawing office and question the reinforcement in a beam, he had an uncanny feel for the movement of stresses and strains in a structure, and he would always impart his knowledge to staff in a most modest and tactful way.



In 1969 the Melbourne office had a visit from the London's senior partner, and Geoff emerged from the meeting to ask me if I would be prepared to move to Singapore to start a business for the firm in Asia.

I consulted Geoff on all major matters concerning the development of the business, and I was fortunate, after my move to Hong Kong in 1970, that Geoff made many visits to the region.

Geoff and Lee, Rose and I, had many happy holidays together and we will very much miss his dry humour and competitiveness on the golf course.

Above all, a really great engineer, and all those in Maunsell were fortunate to have worked with him.

BRIAN ADAMS

Sad news indeed, especially so soon after we lost John Clayton.

When I joined Maunsell from JD & DM Watson in 1966, Geoff was an icon of the cohort of brilliant engineers in the Melbourne office. Laconic, modest to a fault, fun-loving, sporting, mateship, dry-humour; he espoused the Australian ethos I enjoyed as a Pommie migrant.

My enduring memory is when my then-wife and I went to supper with him and Lee (Daphne and she were librarians) I noticed a photo of Geoff in an illustrious cricket team on the mantelpiece. He subsequently surreptitiously turned it back-to-front. I think that characterized his life: modest brilliance.

Thank you Geoff for knowing me.

¹ John Downer is Geoff's long-time close friend at Maunsell. He ran the Hong Kong business for many years.

IAN BREWSTER

This news, whilst very sad, is the signal of the end of a life exceedingly well lived.

Geoff was a wonderful advisor and kind mentor in the Melbourne office. His subsequent work on things natural on his return to Perth was undoubtedly a fine addition to his contribution to Engineering.

Vale Geoff.

HUGH BROWN

It will be sad for you to be the one who “tolls the knell of parting day” for now two of the great men of Maunsell’s early social history who did so much to shape the character of the firm, and who made it such an enjoyable environment for everybody who worked there.

We all have our memories of Geoff, who was so much more than a brilliant designer and engineer. Mine include the really funny badinage between him and Mike Patterson on many Friday nights at the Met (a local low-grade pub), which were always enlivened by Geoff’s presence and did a great deal to build an inclusive atmosphere for the different groupings. He gave a lot of support to the start-up of “The Maunsell Whisper”, and later to the group starting up the Social Club, despite the ongoing agonies of West Gate Bridge.

We are all privileged to have known and learnt from Geoff.

NORMAN CROOK

Indeed this is sad news. My first assignment with Maunsell was working with Geoff in Canberra in 1963 assisting with work on Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and Gardens etc in preparation for the Royal Visit in 1963. He certainly had a great influence on me as he gave me a great introduction to the world of consulting engineering that served me well through my career.

Vale Geoff.

PETER DARVALL²

My first job with Maunsell was working under Geoff Fernie in 1964 on the Victoria bridge across the mighty(!) Torrens in Adelaide. He was certainly a great engineer and mentor. I will always be grateful for knowing him

ERIC ENGLUND

I, like others, remember Geoff Fernie with a deep appreciation for the friend he was as a person and as a supporter in the earlier development of my career.

As a recent graduate, Geoff was my first boss and although an eminent engineer himself, he was always personable and self-effacing, taking time every couple of weeks to come and have a chat about how you were going, what you were doing and maybe some technical advice if sought. Against the background of the engineering we did each day there was the informal fellowship when

² Peter was one of several academics to gain early practical experience with Maunsell. Ultimately he became Pro Vice Chancellor of Monash University.

it was “beer o’clock” (5pm) each Friday. It was usually held around a space cleared at the end of the long layout table with drinks provided by Maunsell. Some of the stalwarts there included John Scott, Frank Gerace, Peter Scott, Fred Wheeler, a young Judith Uren and of course Geoff.

There were the more formal functions or a visit to John St in Cottesloe where we would also meet Lee. She seemed to be remarkably informed as who was who and their spouses and families. This was the ethos of a friendly office and good personal service to clients that Geoff fostered, though it was more “caught than taught”. In later years it was what I sought to emulate in the teams and projects I was privileged to lead, albeit not with the natural ease that Geoff had. I appreciate this even more now, when consulting is driven by corporate processes and financial targets, but for all of that I suspect we were just as profitable then.

Geoff sought to encourage the strengths and interests his staff had and this often led to enduring benefits. I was interested in the computer analysis of bridges and structures, which was a relatively new science then and I tended to do much of that analysis on the projects we had. Geoff won a job opportunity to undertake the operational modelling of Port Hedland, and asked if I could learn this even more formative science of computer modelling transport systems and do the job. We did, and this gradually led to more this work, even after Geoff’s retirement. Later it led to creation of the Simulation and Analytics Group in Maunsell and now AECOM. In those earlier years Geoff also arranged secondments to Hong Kong, Melbourne and Hobart (Tasman Bridge Restoration).

Geoff was active in the engineering profession, particularly in the IEAust and ACEA, and encouraged his staff to also be involved, including payment of our subscriptions. I remain involved to this day.

Geoff knew your interests and would actually suggest conferences and courses we might attend. So it was that I was sent on a course in the UK and a few years later Geoff suggested I go on a week-long Study Tour of Rail Engineering in the Pilbara. This reinforced a transition from a bridge/structural engineer to railway and ports which has been my dominant career interest since the 1990’s.

Like many others, I still warmly remember Geoff’s friendly and unassuming personality, and acknowledge his influence as an engineer on our professional lives, sometimes in profound ways.

Thank you Geoff.

MIKE EVANS

Very sad news. Geoff had passion, brilliance and personality and was only too happy to share.

When I came out to Australia in 1972 and just before he went to Perth, I worked for him on the tender design for a large concrete railway bridge over a gorge in New Zealand. I was amazed by how he came up with great ideas for the design.

The first time I encountered Geoff was when I was a young engineer at the London office of G Maunsell and Partners, around 1971. The hush of a rather staid office was disrupted by a noisy discussion from a small group of engineers lead by someone, from his accent clearly Australian, who was kneeling on the floor poring over drawings with great enthusiasm. On enquiring of a colleague what was going on, I was told “It’s Geoff Fernie” and then by way of explanation “He is a director from Australia”.

PETER FRANCIS³

Sad time indeed. I started to write my recollections but they seem almost word for word with John Downer's, so I'll just second John's thoughts.

Yes, Geoff's feel for what was right, or wrong, in a design was uncanny. I also had the pleasure of both his company and his skills with my Monash University Thirds cricket team from 1965 to 1967. His first preference in serious cricket was as a wicket keeper but he was also such a useful quick bowler it was often difficult to know how to best utilise his skill set. I will also miss his considerate and generous nature, particularly if one was going through a difficult time.

They don't make them like that anymore.

ALEXANDER (SANDY) HAMILTON

Jean and I were both saddened by the news from Roger Wright that Geoff had died. It really came as no great surprise as he had been unwell for quite some time, even before Lee died, and the Fernie Christmas cards dried up.

I first came across Geoff in 1959, the year that I joined the Maunsell family. We used to enjoy great fun together in the office. He and Lee were among the earliest to recognise our intentions when he saw me with my wife-to-be in a street near to the Haymarket Office, and carrying a newly bought wedding magazine. They were guests at our wedding in 1961.

We had lots of fun and laughter across our drawing boards such when as I told stories about my experiences in Broome, where I had been sent for a few months later that year. Especially amusing were the stories about a well-known woman who frequented the bars along the Kimberley coast – she was known as No Pants Nancy. Geoff recalled her for our wedding as we received a greetings telegram from N.P. Nancy. Fortunately, my wife had already known all about her.

Our grand tour for our Golden Wedding took in WA and the four of us enjoyed a wonderful evening together in their holiday flat in Albany. Each of us hoped that the evening would never end as we laughed so much reminiscing together. I had been somewhat apprehensive before we met that evening for it had been years since we had seen each other. However, my wife was completely reassured when she heard us being rude to each other within minutes.

We have lost a great engineer and a lovely friend.

TONY HERBERT⁴

When Geoff Fernie died he had been in poor health for some time so, although not unexpected, the news came as a great shock to his many friends and colleagues.

Geoff was a true Maunsell legend and great influencer of young engineers. To me he was also a personal friend for 56 years. Geoff was one of the people I admired most.

We met when I joined Maunsell in January 1964 when I was 21 and began to work on Canberra projects. Geoff came to Melbourne and I was impressed by his great knowledge, friendliness and the fact that he was able to address Mr Birkett as "Miles". I couldn't do that for quite some time.

³ As a long-time design engineer at Maunsell, Peter shared Geoff's love of cricket.

⁴ Started working with Geoff in January 1964 when he was Canberra manager.

After a stint in Canberra, which was basically civil engineering, I became interested in structures. As part of the Fernie team working on some bridges in Adelaide, the Tullamarine Freeway and other structures I realised that Geoff was a genius and I was very fortunate to be learning from him.

Geoff's involvement with the West Gate Bridge caused him great distress, even though he did his best to rescue the ailing project. The collapse, and particularly the ensuing royal commission was a very difficult time for him and eventually affected his health. When in 1972 he returned to Perth to manage the office it was without the old spring in his step.

However he managed to convert what was really the WAGR project office into a broader business and attracted some top-class people around him.

Geoff and Lee were a team. They were wonderful hosts whose company Jill and I enjoyed on many occasions. A fond farewell to both of them.

JOHN LAURIE⁵

I first met Geoff in the Melbourne office in 1959. I had just joined G Maunsell and Partners and Geoff was returning to Australia having been sent by Miles Birkett to London office to get some experience.

They were busy but scintillating days. Tasman Bridge and Gladesville Bridge were in construction and Miles Birkett was securing an enormous amount of new design work - Jackadgery, Wardell, Tarban Creek, Huntleys Point, Church Street- all bridges in NSW, the formation of the three lakes in central Canberra and the Kings Avenue Bridge and Commonwealth Avenue Bridge which spanned them. And there were more.

In 15 years or so Maunsell stamped its name as the most progressive designer of bridges. The size of the staff increased enormously as did the huge amount of work generated by John Downer from Hong Kong.

During this time more design work became decentralised with the growth of substantial offices in Melbourne, Hong Kong, Sydney, Perth and several smaller establishments. This demanded a great deal of co-ordination and management and quietly, with the minimum of fuss Geoff Fernie carried out this role to perfection. This was never at the expense of humour or razzing up, particularly on the cricket field. And Lee close by was the perfect mate.

There will only be one Geoff Fernie, but he will long be remembered as one of the nicest people one could meet and a gifted engineer.

DONALD MACLEOD⁶

Life is always full of accidents in time and place. Little did I know when joining Maunsell in Canberra in 1972 that it almost coincided with Geoff Fernie starting on a new professional path; from one of the firm's leading bridge and structural engineers to an environmental adviser to the mining industry.

He was gracious enough in the early 1970's to invite me to take part in two Perth projects.

Bauxite mining in the Darling Ranges outside Perth and later the Yeelirrie Uranium mine. What two eye-openers! The mining required shallow dispersed pits in a Jarrah Forest and Conservation area. Rather than falling under the conservative influence of the ever present state regulators, Geoff was always firmly of the view that all our clients have an excellent case for developmental approvals and

⁵ John was Maunsell's Chief Executive from the early 1970's.

⁶ Donald Macleod shared the "environmental phase" of Geoff's career and later became chairman of the company.

our documentation should build on their history. It was soon became clear that Alcoa as client knew more about mining in the Darling Ranges than anybody else and they were worthy of support. Likewise Yeelirrie for Western Mining Corporation where Geoff soon mastered the (relatively) new technology of mining radio-active ores and soon had the team talking confidently about “radon daughters” and other issues. Geoff was the best writer in our team and encouraged the best specialists to join us. Harry Butler, then the ABC’s environmental guru was a specialist and it was Geoff’s friendly but knowledgeable approach that allowed comfortable arrangements between client, specialists and government authorities.

Geoff was generous with office cars at weekends and entertainments at home at the famous Cottesloe penthouse. His gentle management style also permeated Perth Office.

Later at Maunsell Board meetings his deep knowledge of the firm, its staff and its processes and his support for newcomers was always welcome.

I was pleased that Maunsell could place such wonderful opportunities before a newcomer.

RAY MILES

My contact with Geoff started seriously in September 1985 when I moved from Adelaide to Western Australia to take over from Geoff, who was retiring for health reasons, to become Maunsell’s Perth office manager. At that time Steve Cowie was still in Perth winding up the Dampier to Perth pipeline project office. Geoff and Lee were very kind and helpful to Angela and I as we made the big move with three teen age children, the oldest having to tackle his year 12 in Perth. I recall Geoff introducing me to his bank manager so that I could get a home loan quickly, and of a reasonable amount, as money was still rationed in those days.

Geoff and the design team, on behalf of the Main Roads Department, had just finished designing the Redcliffe Bridge, which crosses the Swan River east of Perth near the airport. Thiess had won the construction contract (with new local manager Nick Jukes) and Geoff would pop in to site from time to time to keep a watchful eye on things. As I remember he was also providing occasional advice to the team of Peter Scott, Frank Gerace, Judith Uren and Eric Englund with the design to strengthen the existing Narrows Bridges. Others will, I am sure, have more to say about Geoff’s excellent bridge design skills.

We were also fortunate to visit Geoff and Lee at their rural hideaway at Walpole, just west of Denmark and Albany. Geoff loved the isolation and peace of the area plus the natural environment in which he took a great interest. Towards the end of our time in Perth, in mid 1989, Geoff was supportive of the plan to merge our local office with Halpern Glick to form Halpern Glick Maunsell, which traded from 1 July 1989. At that time our family moved to Sydney where I took over the office management role from John Downer. In the latter part of 1989, during the pilots’ strike, our daughter had remained in Perth to complete her year 12. After boarding with friends had not worked out Geoff and Lee found us a flat near their Cottesloe penthouse apartment for Angela and our daughter to stay during the last three months of the school year, a gesture for which we were both very grateful.

DAVID ODGERS⁷

Geoff was such an extraordinarily gifted engineer technically that it is easy to overlook how strong his aesthetic instincts were. I worked closely with him on the elevated roads at Tullamarine and Mascot and was enthralled by the time and effort he devoted to making them look smart; his attention to detail in this respect was remarkable. I don’t recall him ever using the phrase “elegant

⁷ Maunsell engineer from 1965, and later CEO.

solution” but to me his work epitomised this philosophy both technically and aesthetically. Maunsell’s work in Canberra especially is a testament to Geoff’s skills and the lessons we learned from him.

There wasn’t much scope for visual creativity on the West Gate Bridge foundations but they certainly stretched our engineering imaginations. The design team comprised Geoff, me and a drafter, for a project which in today’s dollars would be worth around \$500 million and for which there were no precedents or guidelines, let alone codes of practice. Our only reference was an ICE paper on some foundations in the Gambia. So we, or I should say Geoff with me as his understudy, designed the foundations from first principles. It wouldn’t happen today.

He wasn’t a bad footballer either. There were a couple of years in the 60s when we would thrash John Holland at cricket and then they’d thrash us at Aussie Rules. Unfortunately Geoff and I were both full-backs, so I drew the short straw and was consigned to centre half forward, where I quickly discovered my football shortcomings. Luckily, every time I lost the ball (which was mostly) it quickly rebounded from our back line either from Geoff or John Laurie, who was equally as formidable.

What more can one say about Geoff the man? Charming, considerate, witty, kind, gentle, modest - the list goes on. When we were in London in '70 and '71 Geoff passed through and took Christine and me to dinner at Brown’s Hotel. We weren’t experienced restaurant goers back then but Geoff quickly put us at our ease and then, showing off just a bit, bought a bottle of good French wine. When he tasted it he became flustered and the rather poncy sommelier finally got Geoff to admit that he thought the wine was not up to par. The sommelier put on quite a performance of sniffing, tasting, gargling and all the rest before confirming Geoff’s judgement and congratulating him effusively on the quality of his palate. Geoff was always self-deprecating but never more so than on that night. The replacement bottle of wine was pretty good though.

What a mentor he was. I can’t recount the number of times in my own career when I found myself wondering “what would Geoff have done here” and it always seemed to give me a way forward.

PAUL REED

Geoff was a very talented engineer but he also had a deep passion for the environment. He was one of the primary authors of Western Australia's first Environmental Review and Management Plan and this was for the North West Shelf natural gas project in the 70's. He also was a major contributor to similar documents for the Western Mining Yeelirrie and Olympic Dam projects to mine for uranium. In later years this passion became focused on the small community of Walpole on the south coast of WA where he and Leigh set up home for a period. He led the charge to improve wastewater management in the town amongst other tasks that he took on for the community.

Geoff provided myself and many others in the Maunsell family with mentoring and support as we developed our careers under his inspiring leadership. He was a great friend who was always a gentleman and who was highly respected across the industry in WA. In those days, engineers ran many of the public service agencies and Geoff had great working relationships with so many of them. He was often the first point of contact if any of them had challenging tasks to complete or if there was new technology they wished to pursue. They held him as a trusted adviser able to draw on expertise from across Maunsell and the world to bring to bear and deliver excellent outcomes.

As a young engineer under his leadership I was so fortunate to have him as my leader for a period and as a mentor for many years thereafter. I am sure this reflects the experiences and feelings of many others whose lives were touched by Geoffrey Norman Fernie.

PAT SANDS⁸

Somewhere in my collection I have a photograph which I took of Paul Andrew, Geoff Fernie and Don Leslie at the post-tensioning of Wooralloo Brook Bridge, the first bridge on the Standard Gauge Railway between Perth and Kalgoorlie. That would have been, I guess, in about 1963. Even in those far off days Geoff was considered an expert in the quite new science of post-tensioning which he had experienced on the recently completed Narrows Bridge in Perth. He treated it more as an art than a science and seemed to know just when to actually lock-off the cables, and that was why he had been brought back to Perth for the occasion. In those days I was not actually a Maunsell employee but was on secondment from the United Kingdom Railway Advisory Service.



Much later in 1972 he came back to his hometown after his health had been very seriously affected by the strain of the West Gate Bridge collapse and subsequent Royal Commission (both of which also contributed to the death of Miles Birkett). He worked with me until I moved over to Melbourne early in 1975 and had a large part in all the Perth projects of those days including particularly the Stirling Bridge in Fremantle.

He and Lee were always great friends to Brenda and I. His wry humour will be sorely missed.

DAVID STEWART

Tony, John and others.

You knew Geoff so well and have written so well of him, his person, his life, as an engineer. I saw Geoff in Melbourne office and was in awe of the quiet aura he gave out, seemingly to all.

I eventually worked (a little) with him when John Downer suggested we needed Geoff to resolve a bridge concept for the road debauching out of the Junk Bay tunnel across a ravine and then down the mountain side. He sat quietly above the site for several hours as if in contemplation then came down to the office to develop his proposal, a balanced cantilever if I remember correctly.

You original engineers in Maunsell created a college, an academia, of engineering excellence and Geoff was certainly an exemplifier of that excellence and humanity.

NORMAN TICKNER

I first met Geoff in London in GM&P office in Greener House, Haymarket. I think it was 1960. The building is still there – I saw it on a recent visit. Later, I worked with Geoff in Melbourne and Canberra, mostly on designing bridges and viaducts. In Canberra we played weekend cricket with a local team and Geoff was ace wicket-keeper, very vocal behind wicket much to the consternation of the batsman.

In Melbourne I enjoyed many happy times with him and Lee playing carpet bowls and sipping fine wine. Our work on Lower Yarra Crossing (West Gate Bridge) in London and Melbourne was one of the most memorable engineering tasks, particularly the pier designs and finite element analysis of

⁸ Pat ran the Perth office prior to Geoff taking over in 1975.

the columns at the bearings. In later years I managed to see him on occasional visits to Perth but much to my regret I didn't get to see him in very recent times.

Geoff was a fine engineer, a great mentor and a dear friend. I owe him a lot and I will be forever grateful for his friendship, instruction, guidance and wise counsel.

RIP Geoff.

JUDITH UREN⁹

I last saw Geoff at Lee's funeral, which was not long ago. Although the circumstances were not great, it was lovely to see this inspirational past boss again. He shaped my life and the opportunities I enjoyed. He was a brilliant engineer and well respected by his peers and staff.

I remember planning leave-without-pay after working in the Maunsell London office for 12 months. Just before starting on the European trip, Geoff sent me a telex saying "the decision is yours, but life is real and earnest". When I phoned him to find out more, I learnt he had won some excellent work and wanted me back in Perth. He suggested he could wait for me to enjoy one week in Paris.

Anyway, yes I did cut my holiday short and returned to Perth to assist. It was through this project that he introduced me to an architect who is now my husband. Yes shaping my life ... Geoff even spoke at our wedding.

There have been many times I have used Geoff's saying "life is real and earnest". As Director at Bruechle Gilchrist & Evans for 16 years, I was passionate about the opportunities provided to our younger staff. And every so often I got the chance to use Geoff's message. What a memory.

JACK WADE

I was so sorry to hear the news regarding Geoff. It's been a sad year with both him and John Clayton passing away. As you may recall I had a lot to do with them both in those heady days of the mid 60s when we were initially working on the Adelaide bridges ; John did the Morphett Street Bridge across the railways and I looked after the Victoria Bridge across the Torrens Lake, all under the watchful eye of Geoff. The experience I gained working with Geoff in Maunsell's Melbourne office served me very well in my subsequent career.

I have very fond memories sharing the cricket field with him , a game at which he was very good. I also admired his interest in nature and in particular his knowledge of Australian butterflies [An old hobby of mine].

Unfortunately I only caught up with him and Lee once after leaving Maunsell. That was at their house in Walpole in about 2017. They made me most welcome and took me on a delightful walk in the national parks adjacent their home. During that visit I learnt of the significant work he had done in helping the development of National Parks in West Australia.

Geoff certainly has left his mark on the world and will be sorely missed.

LEN WALKER¹⁰

I started at Maunsell in 1967 as a green engineer and specialist in Soil Mechanics. I will always remember Geoff as one of two patient and cheerful mentors who helped ease my introduction to consulting engineering and the practice of the geotechnical discipline – the other was Baikie James.

⁹ Judith was one of the first female civil engineers and enjoyed Geoff's support in her early career.

¹⁰ Dr Len Walker worked closely with Geoff on the West Gate Bridge foundations in the late sixties.

Geoff's leadership motto of first in - last out of the office was an example for everyone. One could write pages about his professionalism, technical capabilities, and above all the manner in which he conveyed these to younger staff. The list of tributes says it all. I especially remember a shared doubles victory at a country tennis tournament in Bacchus Marsh – won more by theatrics than by tennis ability.

He will be missed, but the memories will live on.

NAT WHITE¹¹

Sad news ... I knew Geoff only for a brief time but remember the very high regard in which he was held by all.

Many thanks for letting me know.

NORMAN WINFIELD¹²

Thanks for the sad news. Will pass on to some fellow Maunsellians I still have contacts with. Geoff was always a jovial chap who I did not socialise with but had a great respect for. When we were first introduced he called us "Ace" which has stuck with me over the years. Now in my dotage, if I can't remember a person's name I call them "Ace"¹³ which reminds me of Geoff.

MIKE WORRALL

I didn't have the pleasure of working with Geoff and we only ever met at occasional large Maunsell gatherings; however I was twice the recipient of his generosity.

First time: not long after I became a shareholder the annual dividends, which incoming shareholders relied on to meet their purchase instalments, dried up. So I had to write to the shareholders from whom I was buying, and ask could I delay this first instalment for 6-12 months and instead pay interest which, in those days, was at eye-watering rates. Geoff (and two others who will no doubt be reading this email but have probably forgotten their generosity) immediately said "yes to the delay, but no to the interest".

Second time: when Geoff sold his final tranche of MPL shares, he donated the proceeds to help all incoming shareholders meet their next instalment. I am sure there are many more similar stories of his generosity. Rest in peace Geoff.

¹¹ Prior to a second career in winemaking Nat was in fact a Maunsell design engineer.

¹² Don't worry Norm. Geoff often called people Ace. I think it was his droll humour coming through, taking the mickey out of young engineers, like me, who saw themselves as ace designers when they had much to learn.

KARL YIP¹⁴

It is sad news indeed for us all. My encounters with Geoff have only been brief and short but really wonderful.

If my memories serve me right, the first time was probably in the late 70's when he visited Maunsell Hong Kong providing technical support and advice (amongst some other things) on the Ap Lei Chau bridge which is the first balanced cantilever bridge in Hong Kong, with Francis Bong as the lead designer. Though not directly involved in the design aspects, I was excited in leading a team of drafters to document the design drawing for construction of the first of this type of bridge in Hong Kong. At that time, I was very impressed by his friendly approach to staff and his sense of humour.

The other encounter was in a more social and entertaining occasion in April 1978 when I (with my wife Prisca) visited Perth office as part of our first work/cultural visit to Australia organised by John Downer. We were greeted into his seaside apartment then taken out to the Perth waters in his boat to do some fishing. We did catch a few and actually had them cooked as a snack back in his apartment while enjoying a casual chat. Thanks to Geoff and Lee for such a warm and friendly reception during our unforgettable first Perth visit. All these, and Geoff's friendly smiles, are still very fresh in our minds. I am not sure if it is appropriate to attach a couple of photos here, but I am hoping to share them with those who want to keep some fond memories in their minds of this great engineer and fantastic person.



Photo courtesy of Karl Yip

¹⁴ Karl was chief draftsman in Hong Kong and later moved to the Sydney office.

EXTRACT FROM THE 2014 HERITAGE NOMINATION OF THE STIRLING BRIDGE

Geoffrey N Fernie¹⁵ *Lead Designer, Maunsell & Partners Pty Ltd*

Geoff Fernie graduated in 1956 with a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Western Australia and was employed by GM&P (Maunsell) as a Junior Engineer on the Perth Narrows Bridge. Between 1957 and 1959 he was part of the Resident Engineers Staff on site under Resident Engineer T G Bingham.

After several years in London, Geoff returned to Australia and was involved in the detailed design of Commonwealth Avenue Bridge (Canberra), various Standard Gauge railway bridges (WA), and the preliminary design of Batman Bridge (Launceston) under the guidance of Partner, Peter Stott. He managed Maunsell's Canberra office during the pre-stressing of Commonwealth Avenue Bridge and associated Parliamentary Triangle works and later transferred to Melbourne to set up Maunsell's Australian Bridge Design team.

Between 1964 and 1971 Geoff was responsible for the design of a wide range of bridges around the country and abroad including the Hume Highway at Bargo, NSW, Victoria Bridge in Adelaide, Tullamarine Airport in Victoria, Gogol River crossing in New Guinea, including the prestressed concrete approach structures and ancillary works for Lower Yarra Crossing, West Gate and Stirling Bridge in Fremantle which received a Merit Award from the Australian Consulting Engineers Association (ACEA).

Geoff became a Partner of the firm in 1969 and in 1970 attended the Victorian Royal Commission into the collapse of the West Gate steel bridge with colleague E M Birkett.

After two years as Resident Engineer during the construction of the Stirling Bridge at Fremantle, Geoff remained in Perth to manage Maunsell's Perth office and develop the bridge design team. During this period he worked on major structures in Australia and Asia including Ap Lei Chau (Hong Kong), Tai Po (Hong Kong) and Redcliffe Bridge over the Swan River (WA) which was awarded an Engineering Excellence Award by the Institution of Engineers, Australia.

Geoff then went on to develop project environmental impact assessment (EIS) multi-disciplinary teams in Perth employing local and overseas specialists. He managed major EIS preparation for the Yeelirrie Uranium Project (1976), North West Shelf Natural Gas LNG project (1979) and was advisor to Western Mining on the Roxby Downs/Olympic Dam project. Geoff was responsible for the Radiation Safety Assessment section and subsequently participated in the Operation Safety Audit for the project.

Between 1980 and 1984 Geoff was the Environmental Co-ordinator for the 1,100 km Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline with Fluor/Maunsell Project Managers, and was also Chairman of the ACEA (WA Chapter) for two years during this period.

Following retirement to the town of Walpole in southern WA, Geoff has been involved as Deputy-Chairman of Advisory Committee to CALM on the Management Plan for the 326,000 hectare Walpole Wilderness Area.

¹⁵ Editor's Note

Almost certainly Geoff would have written the above profile himself. It will be a recent and accurate coverage of his career.